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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses a preliminary study aimed at examining counseling students' cultural identity development. The primary goals of this project were to develop a rubric for assessing racial cultural identity growth; to provide a personal and meaningful paradigm for the trainee to explore racial cultural identity development and a format for self assessment; and to develop instrumentation that is resistant to the influences of social desirability and political correctness. Graduate counseling students' affective and cognitive development, as related to cultural competence, was examined. Students also maintained reflective journals that were used as self-assessment tools for examining their abilities to handle the dynamics of difference influenced by racial and cultural diversity. Journaling enhanced the counseling students' abilities to define their own cultural attitudes, values, and biases; articulate the potential influence of those attitudes, values and biases on the cross-cultural counseling relationship; and conceptualize and identify areas for professional development related to increasing self-awareness, gaining cultural knowledge, and developing counseling intervention. The rubric developed from this study provides a qualitative tool for assessment of cultural identity development. Appendix A provides the journal assignments; Appendix B provides the rubric. (MKA)

Training Culturally Competent Counselors: Can We Meet the Challenge?

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Training Culturally Competent Counselors: Can We Meet the Challenge?

A current thrust in the training of professional counselors is the need to develop counselors who are culturally competent. Ethnic minorities underutilize counseling services in all of the areas for which counselor educators train practitioners: schools, colleges, and community agencies. A priority in our graduate program is to examine and evaluate the curricular changes required to meet this need. Our goal is to infuse knowledge about diversity throughout the curriculum and to evaluate the change in students' awareness and skills. A preliminary study aimed at examining counseling students' cultural identity development as well as the assessment rubric that grew out of this work are described in this paper.

Current instrumentation for assessing counselor awareness focuses primarily on self-report and/or responses to hypothetical or simulated case problems. These methodologies are keenly sensitive to the influences of social desirability and political correctness. The primary goals of this project were: (a) to develop a rubric for assessing racial cultural identity growth, (b) to provide a personal and meaningful paradigm for the trainee to explore racial cultural identity development and a format for self-assessment, and (c) to develop instrumentation that is resistant to the influences of social desirability and political correctness.

Review of Literature

The literature tells us that cultural competence, like the other counseling competencies, is developmental (Axelson, 1999; Sue & Sue, 1999; Wehrly, 1995). The literature also tells us that there are definite knowledge components and skill sets associated with cultural competency (Arrendondo, et al 1996). What we need now are counselor education training paradigms and strategies that allow students to construct meaning, knowledge, and skills that build depth and complexity as the student grows (Ridley, 1995; Wehrly, 1995). Wehrly (1995) proposes that we teach developmental models to students so that they become empowered to identify and articulate appropriate goals for their growth

during and beyond training. With a wealth of work in the area of identity development already completed (Helms, 1990; Ponterotto, 1988; Ponterotto & Casas, 1987; Sue & Sue, 1999), counselor educators are well positioned to use this knowledge in designing training and assessment.

Literature in the counseling field has consistently pointed to self-knowledge as the foundation upon which professional skill is developed. The Operationalization of the Multicultural Counseling Competencies (Arredondo, et al, 1996) begins with the affirmation that "Culturally skilled counselors believe that cultural self-awareness and sensitivity to one's own cultural heritage is essential (p. 10)." As depicted in the competencies, necessary personal awareness includes the recognition of discomfort resulting from racial and/or cultural differences, as well as knowledge of how these differences affect behavior, counseling relationships, assessment and service to clients. Counselors, like everyone else, are affected by cultural biases, and "unless counselors take a good hard look at themselves, and examine their personal agendas, they are likely to ignore distort or underemphasize a client' idiographic experience." (Ridley, 1995, p.88)

According to Ridley (1995), a major challenge in the professional's struggle to provide equitable service is overcoming unintentional racism. This approach is consistent with Sue's (1999) description of "cultural racism" which contends that traditional counseling theory reflects a monocultural and ethnocentric worldview that reflects majority norms, and continues to maintain a social status quo that is oppressive to culturally different clients. Both Ridley and Sue propose that many counselors unwittingly perpetuate racism because of traditional education, which has provided inadequate training and preparation. Ridley (1995) also contends that "unintentional covert racism involves nonmaleficence and is an insidious form of victimization about which most people know very little and are unable to even recognize the sources or significance " (p. 36). For these scholars and for counselor educators, it is critical that we begin to dismantle the individual and systemic barriers that interfere with the practitioner's development of cultural

competency. Teaching counselors in training to engage in rigorous self-evaluation concerning racial and cultural awareness, knowledge and skill is an important step.

Our goal is to enhance the counselor's self-awareness concerning racial and cultural identity in order to reduce and/or prevent the counselor's personal reactions to race and culture from intruding in unhealthy ways. We propose that when didactic, interactive, and self-reflective experiences are provided throughout the curriculum, counselors in training are more likely to develop broader experiential and knowledge bases to support multicultural skill development and competency. Three important assumptions about cross cultural counseling ground this work: (a) counseling cannot be value free; (b) cultural encapsulation on the part of counselors affects the cross cultural counseling relationship, and puts clients at risk for cultural racism; and (c) counselor educators, counselors in training and professionals in the field must assume responsibility to accurately identify and remediate the influence of racial and cultural bias in the counseling relationship.

Methods

Graduate counseling students' affective and cognitive development related to cultural competence was examined. This study involved two of our program's required core courses: Counseling Skills and Process and Cross Cultural Counseling. The Counseling Skills and Process course is designed to develop students' abilities to use basic skills in an ongoing counseling process. The cross-cultural class focuses on understanding how diversity influences the counseling relationship. Students completing this course are expected to have a knowledge base about cultures different from their own and how these differences are manifest in, as well as influence, the counseling relationship. Both courses were taught using a combination of lecture and experiential learning methods.

In both classes students were required to maintain reflective journals that were used as self-assessment tools for examining their abilities to handle the dynamics of difference influenced by racial and cultural diversity. The specific journal assignments are included in Appendix A. The students were also required to identify new learning or understanding that

resulted from these activities. The questions focused on how students' attitudes and beliefs change as a result of course content and experiences and whether students can assess how their attitudes and beliefs relate to the development of culturally competent counseling skills. Student journals were then content-analyzed in order to develop the assessment rubric.

The Racial-Cultural Identity Development Model (Sue & Sue, 1990) provided the foundation for developing this assessment rubric. Descriptors for each of the five levels provided the first level of analysis for the student journals. For example, Level I is described as the inability to recognize culturally distinct norms and values. Differences are romanticized as well as diminished and spoken of using cliches. Cognitions are general and externalized. Journals were examined for examples that fit this description. From this examination additional sentence stems emerged. Typical of level one sentence stems were: "I don't see color..." "All people are..." "If only they...". This procedure was followed for each of the five levels of the Racial-Cultural Identity Model resulting in a rubric for the assessment of current level of cultural identity development. The rubric is included in Appendix B.

Discussion

Journalizing enhanced the counseling students' abilities to: (a) define their own cultural attitudes, values, and biases, (b) articulate the potential influence of those attitudes, values, and biases on the cross-cultural counseling relationship, and (c) conceptualize and identify areas for professional development related to increasing self-awareness, gaining cultural knowledge, and developing counseling interventions. The rubric provides a qualitative tool for assessment of cultural identity development. This type of assessment is critical in order to assist counselors in enhancing their skills in cross cultural work with clients.

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Appendix A

Reflective Journal Assignment I

The text defines a theme as a repeated set of ideas, beliefs, or notions. Patterns are repeated behavioral or affective sequences. The journal activities that you have completed so far have focused on your awareness of your cultural heritage, and your emerging values and beliefs about your identity as professional helper. Other exercises have focused on awareness of your positions within a larger system's context.

As a professional counselor when I reflect on my own cultural beliefs I realize that I....

As a professional counselor I've learned that my own cultural beliefs influence my impressions of those who are different in the following ways

When I think about my immediate circumstances or the context of my own life and experience and I think about developing cultural competency as a professional counselor I recognize that I

Something I would like to say about how culture influences the counseling relationship is

Reflective Journal Assignment II

The text emphasizes that social forces shape peoples' lives. Socioeconomic and political factors form a larger context that influence each of our identities. You have completed journal activities that have focused on your own goals and how you might go about broadening the perspectives of others.

When I reflect on the socioeconomic and political factors/events that have shaped my life, I realize....

Based on my socioeconomic and political identity, how might my clients see, think, feel about me as a professional counselor.....

Reflective Journal Assignment III

When I reflect on the counseling approaches I have learned, I realize that:

- a) I feel most comfortable (as a client) with a counselor who...
- b) I am most likely to change with a counselor who...

When I reflect on how power may be used by a counselor using the counseling approaches I've learned, I realize that to be culturally competent I...

Reflective Journal Assignment IV

Talk about a goal that will help you broaden your perspective in working with diverse clients.....

When I reflect on discussing differences between my client, and myself I feel...

Describe a counseling scenario in which you would feel comfortable and confident discussing differences between yourself and your client.

Describe a counseling scenario in which you would feel uncomfortable or unsure discussing differences between yourself and your client.

Based on your responses talk about some goals for personal growth.

Appendix B

Culturally Competent Counselors
A Classroom Assessment Rubric

Level I

Inability to recognize culturally distinct norms and values. Differences are romanticized as well as diminished and spoken of using clichés. Cognitions are general and externalized.

I don't see color

I treat everyone the same

All people are ...

I never thought of myself as a ...

If only they ...

Everyone experiences discrimination

Level II

Conflict between wanting to uphold traditional norms and values and wanting to uphold humanitarian values. Willingness to articulate feelings of guilt, anger, shame, and depression

I feel bad that ...

I'm mad about...

I'm so sick of this ...

I'm only one person, there's nothing I can do...

I'm so sorry that...

I was taught that.. but now I know that I have to...

I know that I must...

Level III

A recognition of traditional stereotypes; with expanding definitions and terms; an openness as it relates to counseling; and a reflection that recognizes the incongruities that have been revealed. Cognitions are owned and internalized.

It could be cultural ...

I never considered that...

I thought I was.. but...

I'm so glad I realized that...

It's hard to understand how ...

Level IV

Personally resolved and reconstructed world view that results in reduced conflict and defensiveness; beginning resolution and reconstruction of the world view. Evidence of the struggle to align cognition with affect.

I'm looking forward to learning more about...

I'd like to explore ...

My goal is ...

I now see the need for...

I'm more open to...

I now believe I can...

I'm excited about...

Level V

Comfortable with multiple cultural identities. Explores issues of racism and personal responsibility without defensiveness. No longer fearful, intimidated, or uncomfortable with the experiential reality of race and free to actively seek out multicultural experiences.

My plan is to...

Even though this effort didn't work, I haven't failed

I actively own and intentionally appreciate cultural differences

I am not satisfied with the status quo

I embrace the responsibility to make change